

## ABSTRACT

David A. Lewis, TEACHER LEADERSHIP PRACTICES IN SUCCESSFUL ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: A STUDY OF THE IDENTIFICATION, DEVELOPMENT, AND UTILIZATION OF TEACHERS AS LEADERS IN CONSISTENTLY HIGH PERFORMING ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA. (Under the direction of Dr. James McDowelle), Department of Educational Leadership, October, 2014.

This dissertation examines the identification, development, and utilization of teachers as leaders in thirteen high performing elementary schools across nine districts in eastern North Carolina. Survey data on these schools were collected from their principals, with survey questions based on expectations of teacher leaders and school principals outlined in their respective North Carolina evaluation instruments, as well as best practices identified in a comprehensive review of the literature. Additional information was gathered from principals through follow up interviews. Participating school principals viewed teacher leadership as more closely identified with leadership tasks, and less with leadership titles. When selecting teachers for formal and informal leadership roles, participating school principals valued qualitative characteristics such as a teacher's reputation as a strong classroom teacher, interpersonal skills, and attitude toward education, as well as quantitative characteristics such as content area expertise and student growth scores. Participating school principals valued the leadership development of all teachers, with little differentiation between the leadership development opportunities provided to identified leaders as compared to those provided to all teachers. Participating school principals reported an emphasis on maintaining a school culture that promotes teacher leadership through their use of distributed leadership, their establishment of collective responsibility for instructional planning and student learning, and their willingness to involve teacher leaders in key administrative responsibilities such as decision-making and hiring new staff. This dissertation concludes by offering recommendations for how my school district might learn from these successful elementary schools in order to improve our own teacher

leadership practices to promote school and district improvement, and considerations for other districts as they move forward with teacher leadership.



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ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA

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by

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Defining Teacher Leadership

The current research on *teacher leadership* presents a variety of definitions for the term. Sherrill (1999) associated teacher leadership with prescribed roles and titles such as “clinical faculty, clinical educators, teachers-in-residence, master teachers, lead teachers, and clinical supervisors” (p. 57), while, Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson, and Hann (2002) connected teacher leadership with “aspiring to lead school reform” (p. 5). Both of the aforementioned studies imply that teacher leaders are those who accept responsibilities apart from their peers based on credentials, titles, and/or roles. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) credited teacher leaders with leading within and beyond the classroom, identifying with and contributing to a community of teacher-learners and leaders, and influencing others towards improved educational practice (pp. 5-8). Leithwood and Riehl (2003) emphasized the importance of teacher leaders “providing direction and exercising influence” (p. 2). These researchers assert that teacher leadership can come from within the group, without formal designations, titles, or responsibilities, and can be carried out subtly and informally. But while the aforementioned authors defined teacher leaders in terms that set them apart from their colleagues, Forster (1997) conveyed the notion that all teachers should be leaders when he wrote, “All teachers must be educational leaders in order to optimize the teaching and learning experience for themselves and their students” (p. 83). For the purposes of this study, the researcher has developed an operational definition of *teacher leadership* intended to draw from past research and to align with the state of North Carolina’s expectations for teacher leadership as described in evaluation instruments for teachers and school executives. This study will define *teacher leadership* as the actions of teachers in formal and

informal roles that promote collaboration, professional development of self or others, and school improvement.

### **Need for the Study**

The current North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Model and the School Executive Evaluation Instrument include indicators promoting teacher leadership in schools, but the preparation of schools, administrators, and teachers to capitalize on these changing leadership roles and expectations has not kept pace with the standards. Current research demonstrates administrators' reliance on traditional roles of teacher leaders as a hindrance to instructional improvement (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). Due to the egalitarian nature of the teaching profession, schools' use of traditional leadership structures sometimes causes a reticence among teachers to refer to or even think of themselves as leaders (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Lack of teacher preparation to lead, coupled with a culture that often stifles leadership among colleagues, often leads to an underutilization of teachers as leaders, and limits the potential of teachers to lead meaningful change at the building level (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

This gap between the expectations set for school leaders and the development of their capacity to meet them is a problem of practice in Eastern North Carolina and, perhaps, statewide (Dr. Marvin McCoy, personal communication, January 31, 2013). When a problem of practice exists, the goal of the researcher is to provide practical strategies to ameliorate the conditions that created it (Booth, Colomb, & Williams, 2008). Dr. Marvin McCoy, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, Wayne County Public Schools, agrees with the researcher's assertion that developing the leadership capacity of teachers is important given the current expectations for teachers and school administrators. In an interview with the researcher, Dr. McCoy noted the

expectation that distributed leadership be used in the pursuit of school improvement, but also noted a lack of specific training for stakeholders in how to implement it. Dr. McCoy expressed his support for this study, and hopes that the researcher's findings can be applied in Wayne County (Dr. Marvin McCoy, personal communication, January 31, 2013).

A review of the existing literature on teacher leadership will answer the following critical questions related to the subject:

- How has the use of teacher leadership in the organizational structure of schools evolved over time?
- What are the current policy expectations of North Carolina's teachers and school administrators with regard to teacher leadership?
- What organizational practices promote or hinder the effective use of teacher leadership in schools?
- How can school administrators develop a culture in which teacher leadership is purposefully encouraged and developed, and effectively utilized to promote school improvement and student achievement?

The answers to these questions will provide valuable information to school leaders, administrators and teachers alike, who wish to take full advantage of the leadership potential that exists within their schools.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Murphy, Hallinger, and Mitman (2008) discussed the shortcomings of research in educational leadership. Specifically, the researchers cited the failure of the research to provide specific and observable behaviors school leaders might use to operationalize broadly discussed indicators of successful leaders. The purpose of this study is to identify best practices in the

identification, development, and utilization of teachers as leaders in schools. The researcher will attempt to identify teacher leadership practices in high performing elementary schools in Eastern North Carolina and to understand what steps have been taken at those schools to utilize the leadership abilities of their teachers for school improvement. Through a review of existing literature, the researcher will explore the relationship between the effective use of teachers as leaders and the development of a school culture to promote student achievement. The researcher will compare best practices as identified in the literature on teacher leadership with the reported practices of participant schools. The study seeks to identify formal and informal leadership roles entrusted to teachers in participant schools, as well as to identify elements of school culture that promote teachers as leaders in these schools. The study seeks to identify the elements of school culture that influence the effective use of teachers as leaders, and to identify strategies principals in participant schools are using to develop a school's capacity to use shared leadership for school improvement. Finally, the study seeks to develop a better understanding of how principals can encourage the development and utilization of teacher leadership to promote school improvement in hopes that best practices can be implemented in other schools.

### **Overview of the Methodology**

The problem of practice will be addressed using a mixed-methods approach. The researcher will use existing quantitative data to identify high performing elementary schools in Eastern North Carolina, where student performance has been consistently high over time. All schools who meet the criteria established by the researcher will be invited to participate in the study. Having identified schools for study, the researcher will survey principals with regard to the following: (a) leadership roles and responsibilities entrusted to teachers; (b) elements of administrative leadership that promote the identification, development, and utilization of teachers

as leaders; and (c) elements of school culture that promote the utilization of teachers as leaders. The researcher will analyze the data to identify commonalities among schools that may be replicated in other schools across the region. The researcher will conduct follow-up interviews with principals to explore innovative and purposeful practices in the identification, development, and utilization of teachers as leaders.

### **Definitions of Key Terms**

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions will apply:

*Teacher Leadership* – The actions of teachers in formal and informal roles that promote collaboration, professional development of self and others, and school improvement.

*Consistently High Performing* – In order to be considered high performing, a school must have been designated a “School of Progress,” “School of Distinction,” “School of Excellence,” or an “Honor School of Excellence” under North Carolina accountability guidelines. Schools will be considered for study if they have achieved this status for four consecutive years, with School of Distinction or higher in at least three of the four years.

*Honor School of Excellence* – A minimum of ninety percent of students met proficiency standards on state end-of-grade tests, the school made expected growth or high growth, and the school made Adequate Yearly Progress as defined by No Child Left Behind.

*School of Excellence* – A minimum of ninety percent of students met proficiency standards on state end-of-grade tests and the school made expected growth or high growth.

*School of Distinction* – A minimum of eighty percent of students met proficiency standards on state end-of-grade tests and the school made expected growth or high growth.

*School of Progress* – A minimum of sixty percent of students met proficiency standards on state end-of-grade tests and the school made expected growth or high growth.

*High Growth* – At least sixty percent of students tested made a year’s worth of growth based on state standards.

*Expected Growth* – The average growth for students in the school equates to one year as compared with their peers, as calculated using state-adopted formulas.

*Eastern North Carolina* – Regions one and two as defined by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

### **Assumptions**

In conducting this study, the researcher makes two critical assumptions. First, it is assumed that end-of-grade test scores and the student growth numbers associated with them are valid and accurate measures of a school’s academic performance. Second, since elementary schools only receive proficiency scores for students in grades three, four, and five, and growth scores for students in graded four and five, it is assumed that high performance in these grades are an indication of adequate preparation and high student achievement in kindergarten, first, and second grades. These assumptions are critical in that the test scores available at the state level provide the quantitative measures through which sample schools will be identified. The proper identification of participant schools for use as exemplars is essential if the study’s purpose is to be achieved.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The researcher recognizes several limitations to this study. It is difficult, if not impossible, to account for all of the factors that contribute to a school’s success. Demographic factors such as socio-economic status and ethnicity have been shown to influence student achievement (McCoy, 2005). Such factors are beyond the control of the school, yet they influence how successful a school may become. The research also shows school culture plays a



role in student achievement (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009; Mayrowetz, Murphy, Louis, & Smylie, 2007; Silins & Mulford, 2004), and that the effective utilization of teacher leadership can have a positive impact on school culture (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). It will be beneficial for school leaders to understand how high performing schools use teacher leadership as one of many factors that impact the school's success. The researcher believes the findings of this investigation will be beneficial to school leaders who seek to better utilize teacher leadership, regardless of the grade span, location, or school structure in which they currently serve. The researcher further believes the practices identified may be adaptable in diverse and varying settings.

## **CHAPTER TWO: A REVIEW OF CURRENT LITERATURE**

Classroom teachers have grown increasingly involved in school leadership through their acceptance of formal and informal leadership roles, their participation in decision-making and problem solving, and their willingness to promote instructional improvement among their peers (Lambert, 2006). The term *teacher leader* has evolved over time, changing from a term once associated closely with administrative responsibilities to one more clearly defined by expectations of instructional and professional development (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). Current research demonstrates that teachers' perceptions of teacher leadership vary, as does their preparation to lead their peers. Results of Leithwood and Jantzi's 2000 study of the direct and indirect effects of principal and teacher leadership on student engagement raised questions about whether or not teacher leadership has the potential its advocates claim. Using surveys to measure factors that influence student engagement in school, the study showed that, while principal leadership had a significant relationship with student identification with and participation in school, teacher leadership did not (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). Quantitative research studies have shown a relationship between teacher leadership and school culture, but attempts to correlate teacher leadership with student achievement have been only modestly successful. Most studies of teacher leadership are qualitative in nature, relying heavily on case studies, interviews, and observations by survey. While there is much left to learn about teacher leadership, there is clear evidence to suggest it is a topic worth continued exploration.

### **From Titles to Tasks: The Changing Nature of Teacher Leadership**

The idea of teacher leadership is not new; it has evolved over time in three fairly distinct iterations. The first iteration of teacher leadership was characterized by the establishment of formal administrative roles such as department head or union representative; these roles were

primarily extensions of the school's administration (York-Barr & Duke, 2004), and contributed to the maintenance of existing school hierarchies for decision making (Owens & Valesky, 2010). In their investigation of distributed leadership, Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2001) identified traditional leadership roles used in most schools. These roles include principal, assistant principal, grade chair, and department chair (Spillane et al., 2001). While these roles attempted to empower teachers to actively participate in school improvement, they were often implemented in ways that were merely designed to promote efficiency of the existing hierarchical structure seen in most schools. In her study of teacher leadership roles as they relate to policy and reform, Little (2003) noted that increased external demands on teachers (e.g. student accountability standards) may actually be hindering teacher leadership because many of the traditional leadership roles teachers hold in schools do not match the new responsibilities teachers face in the age of accountability. Her study found that leadership roles have shifted from "rewarding accomplished teachers and supporting innovation and professional development," to "leadership shaped by state-defined and district-mandated reform agendas" (Little, 2003, p. 404). One teacher in this study called his participation as a teacher leader in the traditional sense "taking a turn in the barrel" (Little 2003, p. 406), managing administrative details and coordinating the use of departmental resources (Little, 2003). This teacher's tone and verbiage indicate the misalignment between traditional teacher leadership roles and the current priorities of teachers in today's climate of accountability (Little, 2003). External demands coupled with traditional bureaucratic structures reinforce a hierarchy that places some adults in positions of power over other adults, and all adults in positions of power over the students (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2008).

The second iteration of teacher leadership established new roles and responsibilities for teachers, with duties more closely aligned with schools' instructional agendas (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). In this incarnation of teacher leadership, teachers served as curriculum leaders, mentors, and staff developers, roles designed to capitalize on their expertise. A blend of bureaucratic roles with human resource development functions (Owens & Valesky, 2010), this wave was closely associated with formal structures (e.g. career ladders, school reform models) that were designed to encourage teachers to view themselves as leaders within their schools. In their study of Comprehensive School Reform Models, Camburn, Rowan, and Taylor (2003) identified several new roles for teacher leaders including literacy coach, model coach, and curriculum facilitator. Smylie (1992) noted the introduction of career ladders and the use of mentor teachers, master teachers, and teacher advisory groups, as efforts to improve the use of teacher leaders by redefining their roles. The creation of these roles in association with school reform was not just about having more people in leadership roles, but about having people who were better prepared to lead in specifically stated ways (Camburn et al., 2003). Still, some argue that the use of formally defined roles actually limits leadership development in teachers because they become too connected to the roles, and do not have the freedom to act outside the existing hierarchy or organizational structure (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2008). In summary, this second wave of teacher leadership worked to better align leadership roles with the perceived expertise of those teachers who would fill them, but failed to significantly change the structure(s) in which teachers were expected to lead.

The third iteration of teacher leadership practice, still emerging, involves teachers as creators and re-shapers of school culture (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). This concept of distributed leadership is more concerned with the activities or tasks to be completed than it is with the

positions or roles assigned to the people who will complete them (Spillane et al., 2001). The practices associated with this form of teacher leadership are more ambiguous than those of the first two waves, and rely on the informal leaders within schools to promote change among their colleagues by encouraging examination of instructional practices, experimentation with new methods, and curriculum reform (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Distributed leadership requires that administrators and teachers approach their roles differently and relate to each other in new ways if they are to contribute to school improvement (Mayrowetz et al., 2007). These formal and informal practices are built on the notion that leadership is stretched out over the school's social and situational contexts, and not merely tied to formally established leadership positions and traditional hierarchies of authority (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Smylie (1992) found that schools and districts often created these emerging roles for teacher leadership to meet specific and changing local needs; as such, the roles tended to be varied, flexible, and idiosyncratic. Such a focus on task completion for school improvement encourages teachers and school administrators to shed hierarchies in schools, in favor of more collaborative structures designed to capitalize on human resource development and expert authority (Owens & Valesky, 2010).

### **The Identification and Utilization of Teachers as Leaders:**

#### **Promoting Participation and Eliminating Barriers**

Recent literature on teacher leadership indicates that teachers take on leadership roles for a variety of reasons. Margolis and Deuel (2009) cited the “moral imperatives connected to a perceived need to create better learning environments for both teachers and students” (p. 271) as the most significant motivating factor among teacher leaders they studied. While other factors such as professional advancement and monetary stipends did play a role in their subjects’ willingness to lead, the desire to become better teachers, and to help other teachers do the same,

was far more prevalent in this study (Margolis & Deuel, 2009). Similarly, Roby (2011) encouraged teacher leaders to consider moral motivators in their work, implying that intrinsic motivation is important to those who wish to lead their colleagues.

In his groundbreaking study of teacher leadership, Smylie (1992) measured four sets of factors that contribute to a teacher's willingness to participate in decision making: (a) the principal-teacher working relationship; (b) norms influencing working relationships among teachers; (c) teachers' perceived capacity to contribute to or make decisions; and (d) teachers' sense of responsibility and accountability in their work with students (Smylie, 1992). From the data collected, the author drew three conclusions that he deemed statistically significant (Smylie, 1992):

- Teachers are more willing to lead when they perceive their principals to be open, collaborative, facilitative, and supportive of their judgment.
- Teachers are more willing to lead when they believe they are responsible for student learning and should be held accountable for their work.
- Teachers are more willing to lead when they believe they know what works best.

Smylie (1992) further concluded that teachers were more willing leaders when they perceived themselves to have the capacity to lead, and when they worked under the guidance of a supportive administrator. Smylie (1997) later added that teachers were motivated to take on new leadership roles when they saw them connected to the classroom and their work with students, or as a path to professional development. While there are many documented reasons why teachers choose to lead in schools, there also exists a number of significant barriers to teacher leadership.

Elements of organizational culture underlie many barriers to the effective use of teachers as leaders in schools. Interviews with teacher leaders indicate that teachers often choose not to

lead because of the egalitarian nature of the teaching profession (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Roby (2011) identified teacher isolation, trust between teachers and administrators, and strengthening relationships as top concerns among potential teacher leaders. Rhodes and Brundrett (2006) cited teachers' inability to cope with a change or increase in their workload, and fears about a change in their professional identity as barriers to the development of teachers as leaders. Other major concerns included opportunities for informal leadership, trust, relationships with peers, and support for developing teacher leaders (Roby, 2011).

Teachers are hesitant to place themselves in positions of perceived authority over their peers, instead desiring a balance between their need for personal achievement and their need for affiliation (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Smylie's 1992 study of teachers' interactions with teacher leaders found that the more strongly teachers believe that exchanging advice with others implies obligation to act on the advice, and the more strongly they believe in professional equality among teachers, the less likely they were to interact with teacher leaders about matters of classroom instruction. The same study indicated that new teacher leadership roles may conflict with the notions of equality of status and independence of practice, two professional beliefs deemed important by teachers who participated in the study (Smylie, 1992). Firestone and Martinez (2007) studied the relationship between a district's use of teacher leaders and its implementation of education reform efforts. The study found that the success of teacher leaders (in this case, district appointed specialists) depended largely on their ability to forge trusting relationships with the classroom teachers they sought to assist (Firestone & Martinez, 2007). Teacher leaders reported that trust was gained when they provided materials, training, and curriculum support in improvement efforts, but trust was lost when they were asked to monitor their colleagues use or implementation of improvement initiatives (Firestone & Martinez, 2007).

Anderson's 2004 study of the nature of teacher leadership provided further insight into the use of teachers in formal leadership roles related to administrative functions of schools. Respondents indicated that the use of teachers in such bureaucratic roles in an established hierarchy actually impeded some forms of teacher leadership. In these schools, the principals and formally identified teacher leaders tended to exclude some groups and/or individuals from leadership roles, and reduced the distribution of decision-making and broader teacher leadership (Anderson, 2004). As a result, teacher leaders were perceived more as administrative leaders, reflecting administrative leadership biases and managerial roles (Anderson, 2004). These findings illustrate the importance of placing teacher leaders in positions within the organizational structure designed to promote trust and acceptance from their peers, whom they are entrusted to lead.

There is evidence that teacher leadership can be woven into traditional structures, depending on the specific responsibilities given to the leaders, as well as on the existing organizational culture of the school. Beachum and Dentith (2004) sought to uncover teacher leadership practices that could transform schools into learning communities, reshape the nature of teachers' work, and bring more participatory democratic practices to schools. Their ethnographic study of twenty five teachers in five schools found teachers performing as "quasi-administrators," teaching part of the day but also performing many administrative duties related to curriculum planning, instruction supervision, hiring new staff, handling student discipline, implementing special programming, writing grants, and managing grant funding (Beachum & Dentith, 2004, p. 280). While these roles seem very traditional in nature, teachers embraced them due in large part to the culture and support for teacher leadership in the school. Teachers perceived administrators as open to ideas and ready to embrace innovation, and indicated that



being a leader was integral to their work. Beachum and Dentith (2004) assert that teachers who accept leadership roles in their schools are successful agents in promoting cultural change, pushing the school culture to become more collaborative and more inclusive. The authors concluded that, “When the work of teachers is held in the highest regard and is made visible throughout the school, the culture of the school shifts from authoritative, linear, and mechanical to open, responsive, and thoughtful” (Beachum & Dentith, 2004, p. 284).

While some teacher leaders reported tension between themselves and their colleagues, especially in situations where they were seen as extensions of the school administration (York-Barr & Duke, 2004), other teacher leaders reported greater success when their use was more subtle, and when their leadership was more about the task at hand than about their titles or roles (Margolis & Deuel, 2009). In their study of teacher leaders, Margolis and Deuel (2009) reported on the significant capacity of teacher leaders to impact instructional change by remaining grounded, approachable, and visible. Teacher leaders were more successful when they kept “one foot in the world of teaching and one foot in the world of leading” (Margolis & Deuel, 2009, p. 282). Heller and Firestone (1995) studied leadership in schools that had successfully implemented the Social Problem Solving program. Less concerned with formal roles and titles, and more concerned with leadership functions and how they were carried out, the researchers found that leadership was not defined by titles that implied expertise, but rather by acts of encouragement, motivation, and support of those with the actual expertise to complete program functions and tasks (Heller & Firestone, 1995). Schools that successfully implemented the Social Problem Solving program reported teachers’ reliance on colleagues for reinforcing each other, and for initiating each other into the program (Heller & Firestone, 1995). Heller and Firestone (1995) noted one school whose teacher leaders were strong enough to carry Social

Problem Solving forward, despite having a principal who was not supportive of the program. These findings were consistent with those of Little (2003) who noted the importance of teacher leadership in shifting a department or grade level culture in the direction of innovations that result in higher levels of student achievement. In both cases, social systems existed that were accepting and encouraging of leadership from within the ranks. These studies underscore the importance of school culture in the successful use of teacher leadership.

### **Connecting Teacher Leadership and Organizational Culture**

Literature suggests that organizational culture is influenced by factors other than the practices of those in formal leadership and management positions, and that sub-cultures within an organization will affect the overall culture (James & Connolly, 2009). Research has shown that strong school cultures have better motivated teachers, and that better motivated teachers have higher student outcomes (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009). In education, the principal's impact on student learning is indirect, and is mediated through the climate and culture of the school (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). As such, school improvement efforts must focus not only on structural changes, but also on the culture and organizational health of the school (MacNeil et al., 2009). With a focus on shared goals and a climate that fosters positive interactions and trusting relationships among its members, principals and teachers can utilize the dynamics of school climate and culture to promote school improvement (Karadag, 2009; Keung, 2009).

Critical to an organization's culture is the establishment of a common purpose or goals that unify the group. James and Connolly (2009) refer to the cultural significance of a group's *primary task* (p. 397), and assert that it provides the foundation for practices that directly affect the work of an organization's members. MacNeil et al. (2009) cite *goal focus* as one of two statistically significant dimensions that vary greatly between successful and unsuccessful

schools. And Leech and Fulton (2008) refer to a *purposeful community* that involves the organization's members in planning and implementing a desired change or transformation. Teachers' professional values, a focus on student learning, and a commitment to collaboration and reflective practice are important cultural influences in determining and achieving common goals (James & Connolly, 2009). Furthermore, Karadag's 2009 study of leadership behaviors found that teachers' perceptions of organizational culture were positively affected by performance oriented behaviors from their leaders. By establishing clear goals for the organization, principals and teachers can create a culture that is collaborative and productive.

Equally important to an organization's culture are the relationships that exist among its members. Organizational structures should be designed to promote collegiality, group action, and positive interdependence (Leech & Fulton, 2008), and should be supportive in nature, helping the organization tolerate stress and maintain stability (MacNeil et al., 2009). Research has shown that the influence of sub-cultures is more productive when the organization welcomes social interaction, shared experiences, and group cohesion (Trice & Bayer, 1993), skills that can be fostered through shared decision making, team building, and group processes (Leech & Fulton, 2008).

### **Teacher Leadership Policy in North Carolina**

Like the concept of teacher leadership itself, policy regarding teacher leadership and its use in North Carolina's schools is evolving. While North Carolina law has long stipulated that each school have an improvement team to include teachers, and that those teachers are to be elected by their colleagues, it was, in the past left to school leaders to determine how (or even *if*) to utilize teachers as leaders beyond that (Dr. Marvin McCoy, personal communication, January 31, 2013). As a result of the government's increased focus on student and school accountability,

teacher leadership and its use have found their way into two critical policy-based tools in North Carolina: (1) the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers; and (2) the North Carolina School Executive Evaluation. By prominently including teacher leadership in the evaluation of teacher and principal performance, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education have made explicit their expectations that schools are to utilize teacher leadership.

### **Current Policy Expectations for Teachers As Leaders: An Examination of the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Rubric and the North Carolina School Executive Evaluation Rubric**

The state of North Carolina currently uses two policy instruments that include explicit expectations for teacher leadership at the school level: (1) the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Rubric; and (2) the North Carolina School Executive Evaluation Instrument. While each of these instruments was designed as an evaluation tool for two groups of professionals with seemingly different responsibilities, both instruments include elements and indicators for teacher leadership. The current North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Model was adopted statewide in the 2010-2011 school year. In the years leading up to the adoption, school administrators and teachers participated in mandatory training designed to make clear the State Board of Education's expectations for 21<sup>st</sup> century educators (Cheryll Fuller, personal communication, April 11, 2011). Unlike its predecessor, the Teacher Performance Appraisal Instrument (TPAI), the new evaluation model includes specific language regarding teachers' roles as leaders in their classrooms, their schools, and their profession. The current North Carolina School Executive Evaluation Model was adopted statewide in the 2008-2009 school year for principals; assistant principals began using this model in the 2010-2011 school year.

This instrument includes specific language relevant to the use of teacher leadership in schools, as well as indicators to address school culture, an important factor in the success of teacher leaders in school (Cheryll Fuller, personal communication, April 11, 2011). The subsequent sections of this analysis will discuss the instruments' indicators for teacher leadership in light of three critical themes: (1) administrative roles of teacher leaders; (2) teachers as instructional leaders; and (3) developing a school culture that values teachers as leaders.

### **Teacher Leaders and Administrative Responsibility**

Schools have used teacher leaders to perform formal and informal administrative roles for decades. Grade chairs, lead teachers, and other formally identified teacher leaders have traditionally been placed in these roles to promote the efficiency of the existing hierarchical structure seen in most schools (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). In these roles, classroom teachers typically assist with organizational planning, budgeting, dissemination of information, and other administrative functions. These roles often conflict with the preferred roles of teacher leaders (Smylie, 1997).

The teaching profession is egalitarian in nature, and teacher leaders are often hesitant to take on roles that place them in a perceived position of authority over other teachers. In this light, the two evaluation tools considered in this review only partially align with research-based best practice. While both evaluation instruments indicate an expectation for teacher participation in decision-making structures in schools, there is little alignment among the instruments beyond that. The Teacher Evaluation Rubric sets the expectation that teacher leaders participate in the hiring process, but this expectation is noticeably absent from the School Executive Evaluation Instrument. In sum, the two evaluation rubrics generally encourage teacher leaders' participation in formal and informal administrative roles. But the fact that teacher leadership in administrative

roles is specifically noted only twice on the Teacher Evaluation Rubric, and only once on the School Executive Evaluation Instrument, is an indication that policy makers are eager to promote the concept of teachers as leaders in administrative roles, but are hesitant to dictate *specific* administrative roles for teacher leaders.

### **Teachers as Instructional Leaders**

The role of instructional leader is the preferred role of teacher leaders in schools (Smylie, 1997). Schools have traditionally used the roles of mentor and peer coach to promote interaction between master teachers and beginning teachers in the training of those new to the profession. Increasingly, grant programs and school reform models are encouraging the use of teachers as instructional leaders to promote broad instructional change among all teachers in school. Studies indicate that teachers are eager to serve in this capacity because of their perceived expertise in instruction, and their ability to remain collegial with their peers in this type of role.

The indicators for teachers as instructional leaders from the Teacher Evaluation Rubric speak mainly to teachers' attitudes about instructional change. The rubric encourages teachers to take responsibility for students' short-term and long-term success. It further encourages teachers to take an active role in the policy changes and implementation of initiatives necessary to ensure the success of all students. The evaluation rubric does not speak to specific policies, practices, or instructional changes; rather, it indicates the expectation that teachers are to determine what instructional changes are needed in their classrooms and their schools, and that they are to embrace their opportunity to lead and participate in positive change for the benefit of students. Conversely, while the instructional leadership indicators from the Teacher Evaluation Rubric show the expectation that teachers are to be regarded as the experts on instructional improvement at the classroom and school levels, the School Executive Evaluation Instrument speaks to only

one related responsibility for school leaders: The principal “creates processes for teachers to assume leadership and decision making roles within the school that foster their career development” (McREL, 2009, p. 14). This indicator, as written, places school executives in a supporting role in the area of instructional leadership. Simply put: teachers are to determine their needs, and principals are evaluated, at least in part, on their ability to meet their teachers’ needs as the instructional leaders in the school.

### **Teacher Leadership and School Culture**

A school’s culture is critical to the success of its teacher leaders. For teacher leadership to thrive in a school, the culture must be one of collaboration and support (Heller & Firestone, 1995; Lambert 2006; Searby & Shaddix, 2008). Such a culture promotes teacher leaders’ willingness to lead and to be led by their colleagues. The two evaluation instruments discussed in this review recognize the importance of school culture in promoting teacher leadership, and set clear expectations for teachers and principals for promoting a culture that values teachers as leaders. Both evaluation instruments attempt to take a vague concept, school culture, and define it in more specific terms. The Teacher Evaluation Rubric states clearly that teachers are expected to work collaboratively as members of a professional learning community, and that they are to promote professional growth. These expectations blend the previously discussed expectations for teachers as instructional leaders with the notion that meeting those expectations should be done collaboratively. But the stated policy expectations for teachers in creating a collaborative school culture are limited in comparison to the expectations for principals.

The School Executive Evaluation sets six clearly stated expectations for creating a school culture that promotes and embraces teacher leadership. Principals are expected not only to provide teachers the opportunity to lead in their schools, but to assist them in developing their

leadership skills. Principals are expected to develop efficacy and empowerment in their teachers, and to support them as they exercise those qualities in pursuit of school improvement. The fact that these expectations appear so prominently in the School Executive Evaluation would indicate that policy makers understand the importance of school culture in the success of a school and its leaders. It is also quite evident that policy makers hold principals, above teachers, as being primarily responsible for school culture.

### **Policy Analysis Conclusions**

The fact that expectations for teacher leadership appear so prominently in North Carolina's educator evaluation tools seems to be a clear indication of the value state education leaders place in the role of teachers to lead meaningful change in schools. By incorporating specific indicators in the evaluation models for teachers and principals, state policy makers have mandated that teacher leadership be implemented in ways that are, for the most part, well aligned with research-based best practices. But because the indicators in both evaluation tools are quite vague, teachers and principals alike are presented with a problem of practice. Teachers and principals are faced with the problem of determining specific actions to take in order to meet very vague requirements that have been set for them.

### **Building Capacity for Teacher Leadership**

While it is generally recognized that teachers have significant potential to influence instructional change in schools and districts, far too often teacher leaders are placed in formal or informal leadership roles without the training and support necessary for their success. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) identify two critical factors in the successful utilization of teacher leadership. First, schools with high teacher leadership capacity establish a culture and social context that is receptive to teacher leadership. Social interactions influence teacher



leadership within a school more than training, experiences, personal characteristics, abilities, and the formal structure within the school, so it is important for schools to create healthy cultures and support systems for teachers who may fear damaging their relationships with their peers or administrators as they become teacher leaders (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). Firestone's and Martinez's 2007 study of distributed leadership notes the importance of using teacher leaders to engage in tasks directly linked to classroom instruction, but not directly linked to the supervision of other teachers. The schools in this study used teacher leaders to provide materials, monitor instructional practice, and support the growth and development of other teachers. While the teachers in the study were generally supportive of teacher leaders' efforts to provide relevant instructional materials and support professional development, they reported that the task of monitoring was sometimes seen as "intrusive," and undermined the trust teacher leaders needed to coach others (Firestone & Martinez, 2007).

Similarly, Neumann et al. (2007) encouraged the use of teachers as transformational leaders, whose power is expressed as influence rather than authority. Based on the results of their ethnographic study of twenty five teachers in five schools, Beachum and Dentith (2004) encouraged teachers to assert themselves more frequently and more positively into the daily work of schools. They also urged teachers to take more risks, and to trust their instincts about teaching and children in order to impact students beyond their own classrooms (Beachum & Dentith, 2004). Roby (2011) encouraged teachers to move from one-way mentorship to two-way mentorship, supporting the notion that teacher leadership is the responsibility of all teachers. He continued by urging teachers to move from congeniality to collegiality, and to work to create a community of learners, not just coworkers (Roby, 2011). As noted in Smylie (1992), teachers' perceptions strongly influence their willingness to lead and their success in doing so. As such,

school administrators must be cautious in their use of teacher leaders so as not to undermine the very culture in which teachers are being asked to lead.

Anderson's 2004 study identified three models for the use of teacher leadership, and defined how each model's use impacted school culture. The *buffered* model proved unhealthy for school culture (Anderson, 2004). In this model, principals surround themselves with a few key teacher leaders, insulating themselves from outside influences. While this model may lead to efficient school operations, the principal is less likely to be aware of outside perspectives and their contexts because they rely too heavily on a core group for its vision and feedback. Conversely, Anderson describes a *contested* model in which too many teachers have been given too much responsibility and authority. In this model, the principal is "outside the loop," and often must stand against teacher leaders who attempt to wrest power and decision-making from the administrative head of the school (Anderson, 2004, p. 109). Hatcher (2005) echoed the concern that inappropriate implementation of teacher leadership may result in resistance to the dominant policy agenda. Neither the buffered nor the contested models promote the culture of collaboration necessary for the successful use of teacher leadership.

Finally, Anderson describes an *interactive* model that promotes principal interaction with all staff. In this model, the principal manages to distribute decision-making in a highly interactive way, with involvement from all teachers in the areas of decision-making and problem solving in which they feel most comfortable (Anderson, 2004). Similarly, Beachum and Dentith (2004) cited the need for principals to involve teachers in decision-making, and to ensure they are given adequate time and resources to be successful in them. The authors further asserted the importance of principals learning to trust and regard teachers as their peers, even as they nurture teachers' potential to contribute to school improvement beyond their own classrooms. In sum,

Anderson's discussion of leadership and school culture showed that principal leadership and teacher leadership were reciprocal. When principals used teachers in collaborative ways, the response was the same from teachers. But when principals used teachers as leaders in traditional roles, it created hierarchies among teachers who are more or less closely associated with decision-making, excluding some teachers altogether.

The second critical factor in building teachers' capacity to lead is the development of the teacher leaders themselves (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). The authors state: "Leaders are not born; they grow and develop in knowledge, skills, and attitudes that make them great leaders. Working alone and feeling they should intuitively know how to lead are formidable obstacles for teacher leaders" (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001, p. 53). Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) suggest three steps schools and districts can take to develop the capacity of teachers to lead. First, teacher leaders must understand themselves, their colleagues, and their schools. The authors suggest having potential teacher leaders assess their readiness for leadership using a prescribed inventory or protocol. Such inventories assess not only the teacher's perceptions of himself, but also his perceptions of his colleagues and the culture in which he works. Searby and Shaddix (2008) identified one district's practice of having potential leaders complete personality inventories to learn about their relationship styles, how they behaved when they were most productive, how they operated under stress, and how they would typically lead. One participant connected the inventories with his leadership development, commenting, "I learned that while I would make a good leader, I have so much to learn about how to 'become' a good leader" (Searby & Shaddix, 2008, p. 4). One participant in a study of the Teachers as Leaders program in Mountain Brook Schools in Alabama connected teacher leadership and professional development, stating:

Having been in the classroom for more than fifteen years, I have seen teachers move from teaching in isolation to being true leaders who enact change. In the past, teachers have thought that becoming a leader in their building meant that they must come out of the classroom and become an administrator. The Teachers as Leaders program made me realize that not only can I be a leader in the classroom, but through my professional development, my sphere of influence can reach beyond the classroom and into school wide leadership activities (Searby & Shaddix, 2008, p. 4).

This participant speaks not only to her own changed perceptions of teacher leadership, but also the power of teacher leadership to subtly influence instructional change when the teacher leaders themselves are provided with adequate training to carry out the task. Existing literature indicates the use of inventories and surveys is also present in higher education programs. In his role as Professor of Educational Leadership at Wright State University, Roby (2011) used The School Culture Review with his students who were pursuing a master's degree in teacher leadership. The instrument was designed to help participants analyze their strengths and weaknesses with regard to the following elements of school culture: trust and respect; relationships; workplace contribution; motivation; leadership; sense of purpose; accountability; workplace goals; meaningful work; cooperation; student achievement; and support. By having potential teacher leaders identify and improve their leadership skills, school administrators and professional developers can increase the effectiveness of teachers as leaders of change.

Second, successful teacher leaders learn to understand the predictable stages of change within a school (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). School administrators often study change theory in depth as they prepare to take on formal positions of authority in a school or district, but teacher leaders also need an understanding of change if they are to successfully guide their peers.

As noted in Margolis and Deuel (2009), teacher leaders can be quite successful when they lead subtly, relying on personal power rather than positional power. Teacher leaders who understand change processes within the context of a school can better anticipate their colleagues' natural resistance to instructional change, and tactfully help them overcome it.

Finally, successful teacher leaders learn to lead groups, to listen, to use data, and to recognize the needs of others (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). Camburn, Rowan, and Taylor (2003) noted the success of Comprehensive School Reform models in preparing teacher leaders to work with their colleagues. In these models, literacy coaches and other formally identified teacher leaders received professional development in the provision of instructional leadership; as a result, the CSR models were successful in bringing about significant changes in participating schools' instructional practices (Camburn et al., 2003). Conversely, York-Barr and Duke (2004) reported that schools often relied solely on the natural abilities of teacher leaders, with little or no training in how to carry out their leadership duties. Under these circumstances, teachers who were naturally more adept leaders were recognized by their constituents as successful, while other teacher leaders reported frustration at their own inability to guide their colleagues (Little, 2003). Searby and Shaddix (2008) studied one Alabama district's efforts at purposefully developing the leadership potential that existed among its staff. Mountain Brook Schools "Teachers as Leaders" program was born from a concern about looming administrator retirements, but the program was not specifically intended to produce school administrators. Instead, district leaders sought to develop leadership capacity among teachers who could, in turn, guide schools from within regardless of turnover that occurred in administrative positions (Searby & Shaddix, 2008). While some participants in this program went on to become administrators, most remained in the schools, working on professional development and serving

on school based instructional support teams. These findings show that by identifying the right people and providing them with the tools they need to be successful, schools can better maximize the leadership potential of their teachers.

### **Major Findings and Interpretations:**

#### **Realizing the Potential of Teachers to Lead Meaningful Change**

Current research indicates that if schools and school districts are to make meaningful changes in classroom instruction, those changes must come from the teachers themselves, and they must be supported by teachers as leaders. Schools' success in this will be determined by their ability to: (1) create a culture that encourages teacher leadership; (2) build the capacity of school administrators to recognize opportunities for teacher leadership; and (3) build the capacity of teachers to lead (Anderson, 2004; Beachum & Dentith, 2004; Harris, 2005; Neumann, Jones, & Webb, 2007; Rhodes & Brundrett, 2006; Silins & Mulford, 2004).

First, districts and schools must carefully examine their current use of formal structures related to teacher leadership. While the positions of grade chair and lead teacher can serve certain administrative functions, it is important to recognize that such positions can also stifle the leadership potential that exists within a school, particularly with regard to classroom instruction (Smylie, 1992). Heller and Firestone (1995) suggest that teacher leadership can flourish with or without formal structures to support it. They noted that committees and structures can enhance communication at the school and district levels, but more important is the willingness of teachers to actively help sustain the vision, progress, and encouragement of the programs and initiatives that will drive school improvement (Heller & Firestone, 1995). Lambert (2006) urged the adjustment of leadership roles for teachers and administrators, citing the need to change relationships within and among these individuals to position schools for sustained improvement

regardless of changes in personnel. In the schools Lambert studied, roles evolved so that they were blended rather than separate, and tasks that were traditionally performed by the principal could be performed individually and/or collectively by any number of people in the school (Lambert, 2006). Lambert (2006) cited the use of team structures, learning communities, and activities that enhance relationships, participation, and skill building as important in developing a culture of shared leadership, and Mayrowetz et al. (2007) stressed the importance of relational trust even before distributed leadership is introduced in a school. The recent trend toward *Professional Learning Communities*, a term used to describe any combination of individuals with an interest in education (DuFour, 2004), promotes shared leadership within groups of teachers, and gives teachers a common structure for the sharing of expertise and responsibility (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Professional Learning Communities foster teacher leadership by assuming that teachers will be leaders of change and development within the PLC structure (Harris, 2005). Crowther et al. (2000) argued for parallel leadership structures where teacher leaders and principals take collective action toward school improvement. Such structures of collaboration and networking can help teacher leaders more fully develop their leadership potential (Harris, 2005). By replacing the traditional top down hierarchy with the philosophy of distributed leadership, schools can develop a culture where teachers recognize and encourage each other as leaders without sacrificing collegiality (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Second, school administrators must examine their own leadership behaviors, as well as recognize the leadership potential of their teachers, and provide them with opportunities to use their talents for the benefit of the school. Lambert (2006) identified several key characteristics of principals in high leadership capacity schools: (1) a clarity of self and values; (2) strong beliefs in democracy; (3) a deliberate and vulnerable persona; (4) knowledge of the work of teaching

and learning; and (5) the ability to develop capacity in others and in the organization (pp. 243-244). Lambert (2006) analyzed principals' behaviors in three phases of leadership capacity development, and asserted that principals can strategically use these behaviors to gradually guide their staffs to develop their own leadership skills. In the *instructional phase*, the principal acts as a teacher, providing staff with instruction in collaboration, the use of data, trust building, conflict resolution, and other key leadership skills (Lambert, 2006). In the *transitional phase*, the principal serves as a guide or coach as teachers begin to use inquiry, question assumptions, and participate increasingly in the leadership of the school (Lambert, 2006). Finally, in the *high leadership capacity phase*, the principal interacts with staff as their colleague, critical friend, and mentor. In this final phase, teachers exercise their abilities to think strategically, share decisions, and engage in reflective practices (Lambert, 2006). Teachers in high leadership capacity schools build a culture of interdependency, self-organize around issues for school improvement, and share authority and responsibility based on expertise and interest rather than role (Lambert, 2006). In this way, the constructs of teacher leadership and school culture work together to support each other for the benefit of the organization as a whole.

Current research also indicates the importance of the principal's ability to articulate a vision for student learning and school improvement, but it is not solely his responsibility to lead the charge (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Principals must generate ways for teachers to lead their peers in the pursuit of the stated goals. Principals should create organizational structures that promote shared decision making, delegation, and distributed leadership, creating a culture of collaboration and teacher leadership (Silins & Mulford, 2004). They should match teachers' capacity to lead with opportunities and functions for teacher leaders at the school, and provide teachers with the support they need to be successful (Smylie, 1992). Principals should encourage



and develop teacher leadership through the use of action research, empowering teachers to formulate problems, analyze data, and plan for school improvement (Diana, 2011). Additionally, principals should hold conversations with teachers about the expectations for teacher leadership at the school (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). While administrators retain most formal authority in the schools, they must be careful to maintain coherence among all of the agendas for which individuals or groups may advocate when leadership is shared (Mayrowetz et al., 2007). Principals must recognize that developing the leadership capacity and motivation of teachers does not threaten their authority, but does effectively level the hierarchy that exists within most schools (Mayrowetz et al., 2007). By openly promoting teacher leadership, and by providing teachers the opportunities and supports necessary to lead, the principal can create the collaborative culture necessary for large-scale change, a culture that relies largely on mutual respect, shared purpose, and allowance for individual expression (Harris, 2005).

Finally, it is recommended that schools build the capacity of teachers to lead. Teacher leaders are often initially identified because of their success as classroom teachers. Unfortunately, success as a leader of students does not always translate into success as a leader of peers. In order to be successful teacher leaders, teachers are encouraged to develop the skills necessary to work with others to create a collaborative community (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Firestone and Martinez (2007) noted that when veteran teachers were used as leaders, they felt confident in their roles and felt that they were beneficial to other teachers; conversely, when newer teachers were used in similar roles, they felt unprepared to support the growth of veteran teachers. Teacher leaders' modes of interaction can also be a factor in their success in working with their colleagues (Firestone & Martinez, 2007). Teacher leaders reported feeling more successful in their roles when they combined monitoring with coaching, and found ways to

suggest that teachers do things differently without being negative (Firestone & Martinez, 2007). They must be able to clearly communicate a vision for change, and understand the how to cultivate political support for change. Neumann et al. (2007) suggest that teachers be informed about transactional leadership to better understand the micropolitical nature of schools. A better understanding of this concept would provide teachers with ways to act within the organization, and redistributing authority to people undergirds the egalitarian nature of teaching far better than the hierarchical forms of leadership that exist in the traditional school setting (Neumann et al., 2007). Teachers must have a clear understanding of their own expertise so they will feel confident in their ability to guide others to change. While the skills mentioned here come naturally to some teacher leaders, we must consciously build these skills in more teachers if the potential of teacher leadership is to be realized.

### **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

This chapter discusses the problem of practice to be addressed by the researcher. The discussion includes the theory of action espoused by the state through their treatment of teacher leadership in the evaluation instruments for teachers and school executives, as well as relevant background information regarding the preparation of teachers and school executives to effectively meet the standards set for them by the state. The discussion includes the guiding questions, research perspectives, participants, and context of the study. Data collection methods and research design to address the guiding questions are also included, along with the limitations and significance of the study.

#### **Theory of Action**

By prominently featuring high expectations for teacher leadership in the evaluation instruments for classroom teachers and school executives, the State of North Carolina asserts a direct connection between the effective identification, development, and utilization of teachers as leaders in schools, and the creation of a school culture that fosters student achievement and growth. The evaluation instruments, when considered together, would indicate that, if school executives cultivate a culture that embraces teacher leadership, and if school executives effectively identify and develop teacher leaders, then school performance will improve.

#### **Background**

The roles of teacher leaders have changed over time, evolving from extensions of the administration expected to carry out managerial tasks within their grade levels or departments, to instructional leaders expected to lead change within and among their peers. Similarly, school executives are increasingly expected to involve teachers in decision making and problem solving in collaborative school structures. However, neither teachers nor school executives have

received much (if any) formal training in how to effectively do this. Many teachers are effective leaders, and many school executives effectively use teachers as leaders, but effective practices among both groups of professionals could be far more prevalent if the identification, development, and utilization of teachers as leaders were carried out in more purposeful ways by professionals who were better prepared to do so.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to identify best practices in the identification, development, and utilization of teachers as leaders in schools. The researcher will attempt to identify teacher leadership practices in high performing elementary schools, and to understand what steps have been taken at those schools to utilize the leadership abilities of their teachers for school improvement. The study seeks to identify formal and informal leadership roles entrusted to teachers in high performing elementary schools, as well as to identify elements of school culture that promote teachers as leaders in these schools. The study seeks to identify strategies principals can use to develop a school's capacity to use shared leadership for school improvement. Finally, the study seeks to develop a better understanding of how principals can encourage the development and utilization of teacher leadership to promote school improvement in hopes that best practices can be replicated in other schools.

### **Guiding Questions**

1. In what formal and informal roles are teachers used as leaders in successful elementary schools?
2. How are teachers identified for formal and informal leadership roles in successful elementary schools?

3. What training, if any, do teachers and teacher leaders receive in order to better fulfill the roles in which they serve?
4. What processes, practices, and/or structures do principals in successful elementary schools use to promote teacher leadership?

### **Research Perspective**

This study will employ a mixed-methods approach commonly referred to as “explanatory design” (Creswell, 2008). First, the researcher will use quantitative data on student achievement to determine participant schools for study. Using quantitative data will allow the researcher to narrow the participant list to successful schools with a proven record of high student performance. Next, the researcher will administer an electronic survey to the principals of identified schools. The survey is designed to collect quantitative data on perceptions and practices of teacher leadership in the participant schools. The survey instrument and its design will be discussed subsequently in this chapter. Finally, the researcher will use the survey data to identify participants for further study. The researcher will look for schools and/or districts in which specific and purposeful practices are used to identify, develop, and utilize teachers as leaders for school improvement. The researcher will contact leaders in these schools to conduct follow up interviews on practices specific to their schools and/or districts.

### **Study Participants**

In selecting participant schools, the researcher reviewed summative assessment data from the four year period including 2008-2009 thru 2011-2012. The research chose not to include data from the 2012-2013 school year due to changes in the state adopted curriculum and assessment practices. All schools selected for the survey and interview process have been deemed by the researcher to be high achieving elementary schools based on multiple criteria

from the North Carolina Student Accountability Standards. For the purposes of this study, “high academic achievement” will be defined by the school’s achievement status. In order to be selected for participation in the study, schools must attain the status of School of Distinction, School of Excellence, or Honor School of Excellence for at least three of the four previous school years. A participating school may have been designated a School of Progress for one of the four previous years and still qualify.

- School of Progress – Between 60% - 79% of tested students are proficient on state tests; school makes at least “expected” growth.
- School of Distinction – At least 80% of tested students are proficient on state tests; school makes at least “expected” growth.
- School of Excellence – At least 90% of tested students are proficient on state tests; school makes at least “expected” growth.
- Honor School of Excellence – At least 90% of tested students are proficient on state tests; school makes at least “expected” growth; school makes Adequate Yearly Progress based on federal guidelines.

By definition of the above designations, selected schools achieved either Expected Growth or High Growth as defined by state standards in at least two of the previous three years.

- Expected Growth – The average growth for students in the school equates to one year as compared with their peers, as calculated using state-adopted formulas.
- High Growth – At least 60% of tested students meet state growth standards.

The sample includes forty-one schools from twelve school districts in regions one and two of North Carolina. Appendix A identifies the schools, their districts, and their accountability status for each of the three years leading up to this study.

## **Measures**

Having identified schools for study, the researcher will collect data from participant schools in two phases. First, the researcher will conduct a survey of principals designed to collect data on the identification, development, and utilization of teacher leaders in these schools. The survey is published as Appendix B. The survey is in electronic format, and is designed to be completed in approximately twenty minutes. The survey is based largely on the expectations set forth for principals and teachers in their respective evaluation instruments, and uses terminology from those instruments to connect reported practices with current expectations of the state. The survey is also influenced by the existing literature on teacher leadership. The researcher will attempt to identify and analyze the purposeful inclusion of teachers in decision-making and problem-solving at the school level. The researcher will identify roles and responsibilities of teacher leaders, as well as address elements of school culture typically associated with the effective use of teacher leadership. Finally, the researcher will attempt to uncover underlying aspects of school culture that contribute to the successful use of teacher leadership.

Upon completion of the analysis of survey results, the researcher hopes to uncover trends and common practices among participant schools. The researcher will examine the survey data to determine the relationship between teacher leadership practices as promoted in the literature discussed in chapter two of this document, as compared with common practices occurring in participant schools.

In the second phase of data collection, the researcher will conduct follow up interviews with principals to gather more information on teacher leadership in their schools. These interviews may be conducted in person or by phone. The researcher will tailor the interview questions to each school based on the practices outlined in the principals' responses to the

electronic survey. The researcher is seeking to better understand, in detail, the specifics of teacher leadership practice at schools who report high levels of success in the identification, development, and/or utilization of teachers as leaders.

Having completed the interviews, the researcher hopes to develop recommendations for principals who seek not only to satisfy the expectations of their own evaluation rubric, but also to help their teachers do the same. The researcher also hopes, by extension, to offer practical advice to principals who seek to use teacher leadership to promote and maintain high student performance in their schools.



## **CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

The researcher administered an online survey designed to collect data on the following guiding questions:

1. In what formal and informal roles are teachers used as leaders in successful elementary schools?
2. How are teachers identified for formal and informal leadership roles in successful elementary schools?
3. What training do teachers and teacher leaders receive in order to better fulfill the roles in which they serve?
4. What processes, practices, and/or structures do principals in successful elementary schools use to promote teacher leadership?

The survey was distributed by e-mail to forty-one potential participants, across twelve school districts in eastern North Carolina. Participant responses were collected over a three week time period, and potential participants were offered three separate opportunities to respond to the survey. Follow up interviews were conducted with respondents who expressed their willingness to participate. These interviews were not conducted by telephone following the protocol outlined in Appendix C. Each willing participant was sent a questionnaire by e-mail, with responses being collected electronically. Some questions were asked of all follow up participants, while other questions were based specifically on individual survey responses. This change in procedure was not seen as a deviation from the intent or purpose of the follow up interviews, but instead as a simple change in the medium used to collect the information. The general questions asked of all follow up participants are listed in Appendix D. Questions specific to each individual participant are not published in this

document to protect the privacy of the respondent; those questions are available from the researcher upon request of the members of the committee. This procedure will protect the privacy of the respondents.

### **Participant Demographics**

Thirteen principals from nine different school districts responded to the online survey, with eight of the thirteen respondents consenting to a voluntary follow up interview. The eight principals interviewed work in seven different school districts. All schools represented in the survey responses include grades kindergarten through five, one school also includes grades six through eight, and five schools have pre-kindergarten on site. When asked about the size of their schools, eight principals reported having no more than forty certified teachers, four principals reported having between forty-one and sixty certified teachers, and one principal reported having more than sixty certified teachers. When asked about their years of experiences in the role of principal, four principals reported serving for three years or fewer, four principals reported serving for four to six years, one principal reported serving for seven to nine years, and four principals reported serving for ten or more years. When asked about their tenure as principal at their current schools, five principals reported being assigned to their schools three years or fewer, five principals reported being assigned to their schools for four to six years, one principal reported being assigned to his/her school for seven to nine years, and two principals reported being assigned to their schools for ten or more years.

### **Roles of Teacher Leaders**

In order to determine the roles of teacher leaders in completing critical tasks related to school improvement, the researcher first asked participants to identify the formal and informal leadership positions that exist within their schools. Participants were asked to select the roles

that exist in their schools from a list of choices embedded in the survey. They also had the option to use text to add any existing roles that did not already appear among the answer choices. Table 1 shows the stated roles, and the rates the respondents reported using teacher leaders to fill them.

The data displayed in Table 1 indicate the use of traditional teacher leadership roles such as *grade / department chair* and *mentor* in all schools, as well as all schools' compliance with North Carolina laws regarding the use of teachers as school improvement team members. Most schools also reported using teachers as *committee chairs* in their buildings, as well as to represent the school on district level committees outside the school. While seven schools reported having a designated *curriculum facilitator / specialist*, fewer than half of the participants reported having other teacher leaders in identified roles related to curriculum and instruction or professional development. These results would suggest that participant schools only use teachers as leaders in roles that are primarily administrative in nature. However, responses to a follow up question later in the survey indicate otherwise.

Principals were further asked to report on their utilization of teachers as leaders by indicating whether or not they involved teacher leaders with specific tasks in the school. Participants were asked to select tasks from a list of options embedded in the survey. Participants were also given the option to use text to add tasks that did not appear among the existing answer choices. Table 2 shows the stated tasks, and the rates at which the respondents reported using teacher leaders to participate in or complete them.

The responses in Table 2 suggest that teachers are involved in leadership tasks related to school improvement, even when they are not given titles to indicate leadership. For example, while only six principals reported using teachers as *professional development leaders* (see Table

Table 1

*Teacher Leader Roles*


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Leadership Role	Principals (out of thirteen) Using Teacher(s) in Role
Grade / Department Chair	13
Committee Chair	12
School Improvement Team Member	13
Mentor	13
Lead Teacher	4
Task Force / Ad Hoc Committee	4
Program Head	6
Subject / Content Leader	5
District Committee Representative	8
Professional Development Leader	6
Curriculum Facilitator / Specialist	7
Literacy Coach	4
Other	2

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Table 2

*Teacher Leader Tasks*

Leadership Task	Principals (out of thirteen) Using Teacher(s) to Participate in or Complete Task
Policy Development	10
Curriculum Planning	11
Formative Assessment Development	10
Data Analysis	13
Mentoring / Coaching	13
Interviewing / Hiring of New Staff	13
Evaluating Other Teachers	10
Budget Development	10
Evaluating Materials and Resources	11
Conflict Management / Resolution (staff, not students)	2
Professional Development Planning / Delivery	10
Coordinating Grade / Department Resources	13
Other	1

1), ten principals reported using teachers to plan and/or deliver professional development, activities that by their very nature require teachers to lead their colleagues. When asked about her use of teacher leaders in professional development, one principal reported teachers feeling more comfortable talking about and sharing their knowledge in areas where they have an interest or expertise. She continued, “Often our staff will be more receptive to an in-house expert than an outsider who might not understand aspects of our school and culture that will influence how we take advantage of new knowledge.” Similarly, while only four principals reported using *lead teachers* in Table 1, Table 2 indicates that ten or more schools use teachers in leadership tasks such as data analysis, interviewing / hiring new staff, and evaluating other teachers. Finally, while only seven schools reported having a designated *curriculum facilitator / specialist*, ten or more schools reported using teachers to carry out leadership tasks related to curriculum and instruction such as curriculum planning, formative assessment development, and evaluation of materials and resources. One principal stated, “I’ve found that identified or named teacher leaders are not always the best people for leadership positions. I look in all corners and cracks to find tasks for staff to take on and take ownership of.” When considered together, the participants’ responses to the survey and interview questions suggest that the use of teacher leadership is less about the formal roles that may or may not exist, and more about the leadership tasks distributed across the teaching staffs in these schools. Table 3 provides a summary comparison of teacher leadership titles and teacher leadership tasks as reported by participants.

### **Identification of Teacher Leaders**

In order to learn how principals in successful elementary schools identified teachers for leadership roles or tasks, the researcher asked a series of questions designed to determine which qualities or characteristics participants valued in their teacher leaders. Participants were asked to

Table 3

*Summary: Participant Use of Teacher Leadership Titles v. Use of Teachers to Complete*

*Leadership Tasks*

Area of Responsibility	Schools Using Titles to Identify Teacher Leaders	Schools Involving Teachers in Leadership Tasks
Curriculum & Instruction	7	10
Professional Development	6	10
Lead Teacher (administrative)	4	10+

consider several factors, and to rate each factor as having little or no influence, some influence, or significant influence in their selection of a teacher for a leadership role or task. Table 4 displays the data gathered.

The results from Table 4 illustrate the level of importance placed on leadership characteristics by participating principals as they consider teachers for leadership roles or responsibilities. These results indicate that the teacher's willingness to serve as a leader and his/her attitude toward education are the most significant characteristics considered, followed closely by the teacher's interest in the leadership task. Other characteristics that were widely valued by the participants include: content area expertise; student growth scores; level of respect among other teachers; reputation as a strong classroom teacher; and interpersonal skills. Characteristics valued less by participating principals include: teachers' years of experience; teacher's tenure at his/her school; student proficiency scores; formal leadership training; and teacher's popularity among his/her peers. One principal distinguished popularity from respect by stating, "A teacher may be popular for a variety of reasons, that are not instructional related, but not be recognized as having 'street cred' with their colleagues." Table 5 provides a summary of the leadership characteristics and their value as reported by participants.

### **Development of Teachers as Leaders**

In order to determine the extent to which teachers are provided training to support their leadership development, the researcher asked about formal or informal training principals provided to teachers in leadership skills associated with school improvement. Participants were first asked about the level of training provided to all teachers, and then about the level of training provided to identified teacher leaders. Table 6 displays comparison data between training provided to all teachers and training provided to teacher leaders.



Table 4

*Factors Influencing the Selection of Teachers as Leaders*

Factor Considered in Selection of Teachers as Leaders (thirteen responses)	Little or No Influence	Some Influence	Significant Influence
Years of experience in education	2	11	0
Years of experience in the school	1	12	0
Willingness to serve as a leader	0	0	13
Formal training in leadership skills	3	5	5
Reputation as a strong classroom teacher	0	2	11
Content area expertise	0	2	11
Test results – student PROFICIENCY	0	11	2
Test results – student GROWTH	0	6	7
Interpersonal skills	0	2	11
Popularity among his/her colleagues	5	8	0
Level of respect among his/her colleagues	0	4	9
Attitude toward education	0	0	13
Interest in the task or role for which he/she is being considered	0	1	12

Table 5

*Summary: Leadership Characteristics Valued by Participating Principals*

More Important to Principals	Less Important to Principals
Content area expertise	Years of experience
Student growth scores	Years at the school
Respect of other teachers	Student proficiency scores
Reputation as a strong classroom teacher	Formal leadership training
Interpersonal skills	Popularity among peers
Interest in the task / role	
Attitude toward education	
Willingness to lead	

The data in Table 6 indicate that participants generally place equal value in the development of leadership skills in all of their teachers, with little or no differentiation or extra training for teacher leaders. All participants reported providing the same levels of training for all teachers in the following areas:

- Analysis and use of classroom assessment data as a tool for instructional planning;
- Analysis and use of school wide assessment data as a tool for school improvement planning;
- Protocols to ensure effective participation in professional learning communities; and
- Collaboration and team building.

One participant reported providing more training for teacher leaders in the following areas:

- Protocols to ensure effective leadership of professional learning communities, and
- Providing colleagues with feedback intended to improve performance.

When interviewed, participating principals agreed on the importance of developing teacher leaders for a variety of reasons. One principal stressed the importance of giving teachers a voice. She stated that early in her tenure as principal she was hesitant to overwhelm teachers with additional duties or requests. She continued, “Over time, I realized that even though they are very busy, they do welcome the additional responsibility of being a teacher-leader.” Another principal noted the importance of building leadership capacity in order to maintain the vision and culture of the school. She stated, “I think my school runs very smoothly whether I am there or not.” She continued, “At some point, I will move on and I want the teachers to have the tools to carry on what we have started and to help the new principal know the culture of the school and to carry on the vision that was started when I was there.”

Table 6

*Training Provided to Develop the Leadership Skills of Teachers*

Degree to Which School Provides Leadership Training (thirteen responses)	Little or No Formal or Informal Training		Some Formal or Informal Training		Significant Formal or Informal Training	
	All Teachers	Teacher Leaders	All Teachers	Teacher Leaders	All Teachers	Teacher Leaders
Analysis and use of classroom assessment data as a tool for instructional planning	0	0	6	6	7	7
Analysis and use of school wide assessment data as a tool for school improvement planning	1	1	8	8	4	4
Protocols to ensure effective PARTICIPATION IN professional learning communities	0	0	10	10	3	3
Protocols to ensure effective LEADERSHIP OF professional learning communities	1	1	11	10	1	2
Collaboration and team building	1	1	7	7	5	5
Conflict management and resolution	2	3	9	8	2	2
Providing colleagues with feedback intended to improve performance	5	4	6	6	2	3

When asked about training for teacher leaders, one principal reported having a “summer leadership team retreat” to nurture his teachers’ leadership skills. He reported this as an effort to build capacity for a collaborative leadership culture within his school. Another principal reported promoting collaboration by modelling it at grade level and committee meetings. She reported that her teachers became much more comfortable leading in her absence because they had an example to emulate. When asked about the types of training they would recommend for teacher leaders, one principal recommended training in facilitative leadership in order to help teachers be better leaders in their classrooms. Another principal recommended training teacher leaders on personality types and how they influence consensus building and decision making. Another principal recommended training for teacher leaders on what she called the “district’s driving forces,” including the chain of command, departments and divisions, and school board policies. With regard to district-level development of teacher leaders, one principal reported the use of “Teacher Leadership Councils” assembled by content area. These groups of teachers are given information from their superintendent, as well as news on local, state, and national issues. That same district provides opportunities for teacher leaders who are aspiring administrators to participate in “shadowing days” where they are paired with successful administrators within the district for a closer look at the roles of school administrators. When considered together, these responses indicate agreement on the need to develop teacher leaders, but a lack of consensus on how best to do it.

### **Processes, Practices, and Structures Used to Promote Teacher Leadership**

The researcher asked participants to rate the frequency with which they used specific processes, practices, and structures to promote teacher leadership in their schools. Participants responded using a Likert scale, selecting one of the following frequency options: never, rarely,

sometimes, usually, or always. Table 7 displays participant response data related to the creation and utilization of processes to distribute leadership and decision-making throughout the school, specifically with regard to the use of teachers as leaders within the school.

The data in Table 7 indicate that participants consistently seek input from teachers when making decisions at school. Participants reported involving teachers heavily in decision-making related to school governance and curriculum and instruction. Participants further reported supporting decisions that were made collectively with teacher involvement. With regard to leadership development, participants consistently reported encouraging teachers to participate as leaders by placing them in roles that foster their leadership development, and by encouraging them to take on leadership roles outside of school. However, participants reported less frequently providing teachers with leadership development activities.

Similarly, the researcher asked participants to report the frequency with which they implemented specific teacher leadership practices in their schools. Participants responded using a Likert scale, selecting one of the following frequency options: never, rarely, sometimes, usually, or always. Table 8 displays the results of this section of the survey.

The data in Table 8 indicate that instructional improvement, professional development, and support for shared leadership were important to the participants. Responses indicate that principals routinely ensure the alignment of professional development with the schools' curricular, instructional, and assessment needs. They also, to a slightly lesser degree, reported implementing structures to ensure collective responsibility for instructional planning and student learning. The responses indicate that professional learning communities, with commonly used protocols, are used to support collaboration and build leadership capacity. Similarly, participants indicated working to meet the unique professional development needs of individual staff

Table 7

*Processes Used to Distribute Leadership and Decision-Making*

Process	Frequency with which process are used (13 responses)				
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
Principal seeks input from teachers when making important decisions at school.	0	0	0	3	10
Principal believes it is important to provide opportunities for teachers to assume leadership and decision-making roles within the school.	0	0	0	3	10
Principal involves teachers in decisions about school governance.	0	0	1	4	8
Principal involves teachers in decisions about curriculum and instruction.	0	0	0	5	8
Principal provides leadership development activities for teachers.	0	0	5	4	4
Principal gives teachers autonomy to make decisions.	0	0	2	6	5
Principal supports decisions made as part of the collective decision-making process.	0	0	0	6	7
Principal creates opportunities for teachers to assume leadership roles.	0	0	1	4	8
Principal encourages staff members to accept leadership responsibilities outside of school.	0	0	1	5	7
Principal incorporates teachers into leadership roles that foster their career development.	0	0	2	3	8

Table 8

*Teacher Leadership Practices*

Practices	Frequency with which process are used (13 responses)				
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
Principal provides and implements structures for professional learning communities.	0	0	1	6	6
Principal provides and implements structures for results-oriented professional development.	0	0	0	10	3
Principal provides and implements structures for collective responsibility for instructional planning for student learning.	0	0	1	7	5
Principal ensures that professional development within the school is aligned with curricular, instructional, and assessment needs.	0	0	0	4	9
Principal works to meet the unique professional development needs of individual staff members.	0	0	0	7	6
Principal works to identify and support new or emerging teacher leaders in the school.	0	0	0	3	10
Principal ensures that professional development is available for teachers with potential to serve as mentors and coaches.	0	0	0	4	9



Table 8 (continued)

Practices	Frequency with which process are used (13 responses)				
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
Principal purposefully builds systems and relationships that utilize teachers' expertise to realize the school's goals.	0	0	0	2	11
Principal utilizes his/her awareness of teachers' professional needs, issues, and interests to facilitate distributed governance and shared decision making.	0	0	0	2	11

members, and providing structures to ensure that professional development was results-oriented. Participants reported facilitating distributed leadership and shared governance by utilizing their awareness of teachers' professional development needs and interests. They further reported purposefully building systems to use teachers' expertise to realize the school's goals. When considered together, these data indicate participants' commitment to establishing a results-oriented environment where professional development and collective responsibility for student learning are valued. The data in Table 8 also provide further insight into participants' attitudes on the utilization and development of teacher leaders. With specific regard to teacher leadership, participants reported working to identify new and emerging leaders, and providing targeted professional development for teachers with potential to serve as mentors and coaches.

The researcher asked participants to rate the frequency with which they took certain actions to create and maintain a collaborative work environment, specifically with regard to their use of teachers as leaders in the school. Participants responded using a Likert scale, selecting one of the following frequency options: never, rarely, sometimes, usually, or always. Table 9 displays participant data.

The data in Table 9 indicate that participants find a collaborative work environment to be important, and that they work deliberately to provide such an environment in their schools. Participants reported promoting collaboration by routinely relying on their School Improvement Teams to make decisions, by involving School Improvement Team members in school wide communications, and by working to develop efficacy and empowerment among their teachers. Participants also agreed on the value of having the School Improvement Team make decisions about school practices, with principal providing feedback to the team for their consideration. Participants unanimously reported always using distributed leadership in their efforts to promote

Table 9

*Creation and Maintenance of a Collaborative Work Environment*

Principal Action	Frequency with which principal actions are taken (thirteen responses)				
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
Principal purposefully promotes collaboration within the school.	0	0	0	0	13
Principal relies on the School Improvement Team to make decisions about school policies and practices.	0	0	0	7	6
Principal monitors the implementation of and response to school policies and provides feedback to the School Improvement Team for their consideration.	0	0	1	5	7
Principal involves the School Improvement Team in school wide communication processes.	0	0	0	7	6
Principal purposefully promotes cohesion, collaboration, and cooperation among teachers.	0	0	0	2	11
Principal purposefully promotes distributed leadership as a means to continuous school improvement.	0	0	0	0	13
Principal purposefully promotes a sense of efficacy and empowerment among teachers.	0	0	0	4	9
Principal purposefully works to develop efficacy and empowerment among teachers.	0	0	0	5	8

continuous improvement in their schools. Follow up interviews indicated a commitment by principals to include teacher leaders in meaningful discussions and decision making in their schools, not just cursory input. One principal stated, “I routinely ask the group to table a discussion until the next meeting so that we can have informal conversations and try to build consensus before making a decision. I routinely plant seeds of discussion among stakeholders, knowing they will discuss issues on the side and when we all come together, the issues will have been knocked around and the group will be in a better position to reach consensus.” Another principal commented on the depth of discussion that takes place when she includes teacher leaders in the interview process for vacant positions at her school. She stated, “The conversations are priceless...they agree and disagree, defend their choices or give a different perspective.” She continued, “Only once did we hire someone who did not fit into our culture. The teachers know they hired these persons and they jump in and make sure [they] are successful.”

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

The purpose of this study was to provide information and guidance for school leaders on the identification, development, and utilization of teachers as leaders of school improvement. The researcher developed an operational definition of *teacher leadership* as “the actions of teachers in formal and informal roles that promote collaboration, professional development of self or others, and school improvement.” The researcher adopted Forster’s 1997 assertion that all teachers should be leaders, and sought to determine to what extent teacher leadership was being promoted and developed in successful elementary schools in Eastern North Carolina.

From the outset of the project, the researcher recognized a gap between the expectations set for school leaders with regard to teacher leadership, and the development of their capacity to meet those expectations. The North Carolina evaluation instrument for school executives indicates that principals should develop and utilize teachers as leaders, and the North Carolina evaluation instrument for teachers expects their participation as teacher leaders. However, often neither group receives purposeful support in meeting the standards set for them. The researcher worked to identify the practices in the identification, development, and utilization of teachers as leaders at successful elementary schools so that other school leaders might adapt those practices to fit the needs of their schools.

### **Current Literature on Teacher Leadership**

Teacher leadership began simply as an extension of school administration, with teachers carrying out roles designed to promote efficiency within a clearly defined traditional hierarchy. While roles such as grade chair and department head were initially seen as rewards for good teachers, the changing nature of the teaching profession and its increased focus on accountability led to a misalignment between traditional teacher leadership roles and the current priorities of

today's classroom teachers. Teacher leadership later evolved into new roles and responsibilities more closely aligned with schools' instructional agendas. Teachers began to serve as curriculum leaders, staff developers, and mentors – roles designed to capitalize on their expertise. While these roles were more closely related to classroom instruction and school improvement, they still indicated the use of teachers as leaders in formal structures, a practice some researchers felt limited the full realization of the potential of teacher leadership in schools. The most recent wave of teacher leaders are now serving in more subtle ways. Using distributive leadership, schools rely on their teachers to lead both formally and informally, providing guidance and support for school improvement through professional learning communities. As such, all teachers are expected to lead not based on assigned roles, but instead on their expertise as it relates to a given task. Despite the expectation of leadership, not all teachers lead for the same reasons, and some choose not to lead at all.

Teachers take on leadership roles for a variety of reasons. Professional advancements and monetary stipends motivate some teachers, but the primary motivation of teacher leaders is their perceived need to help their students, their colleagues, and their schools improve. This sense of professional accountability drives teachers to lead, especially when the culture of the school is supportive of teacher leadership. Teachers choose to lead when they feel supported by their administrators, and when they feel they have the requisite expertise required to carry out the task at hand. Conversely, teachers are hesitant to lead when placed in a position of authority over their peers. For example, teachers who might be willing to lead professional development are unwilling to monitor the implementation that follows due to their desire for balance between their need for personal achievement and their need for affiliation with their colleagues. Other barriers to teacher leadership are the increased workload that results from the responsibilities of

leadership, a lack of trust between teachers and administrators, and the culture of isolation that exists within some schools. The literature concluded that teacher leadership could be advanced when schools focused on establishing and maintaining a culture that supports it.

Perhaps the most important aspect of using teacher leadership to promote school improvement is the establishment of an organizational culture that promotes and accepts teacher leadership in the first place. Researchers point to the effect of school culture on teacher motivation, and of teacher motivation on student outcomes. With a focus on shared goals and a climate that fosters positive interactions, trusting relationships, and collegiality, principals can advance the organizational health of their schools, a factor that directly affects the work of the organization's members.

A second critical factor in building teachers' leadership capacity is the development of the teachers themselves. Researchers cite schools who help teachers understand themselves and their readiness to lead using leadership inventories and protocols designed to help staff better prepare for the interpersonal interactions that are part of the daily lives of leaders. Researchers also assert that successful leadership development also includes training in understanding and leading change, group dynamics, and data analysis. Research indicates it is not enough to rely on whatever innate leadership skills may exist within our best teachers; rather, teacher leaders must be identified and developed if schools are to maximize the leadership potential that exists within their schools.

In addition to developing the leadership skills of teachers, principals must examine their own leadership behaviors and develop their own capacity to utilize teacher leadership for the benefit of their schools. Principals must be self-assured and confident enough in their own abilities to share leadership responsibilities with their staff. They must work to match teachers

with the leadership opportunities and functions that exist within their schools, and then provide those teachers with the training and support they need along the way.

### **Summary of Findings**

Principals who responded to the online survey demonstrated their use of teacher leaders less through the use of leadership titles and more through the assignment of leadership tasks. For example, while fewer than half of participants reported giving teachers identified roles or titles related to curriculum and instruction or professional development, nearly all participants reported using teachers in those ways to carry out tasks in their schools. Participants agreed that spreading leadership throughout their teacher staffs was an effective way to engage more leaders, capitalize on teachers' individual areas of expertise, and promote distributed leadership without sacrificing collegiality or placing teachers in positions of stated or perceived authority over each other.

When asked about their identification of teacher leaders, principals of successful elementary schools look largely to the professional reputations and results of their teachers. Principals sought leaders with strong interpersonal skills and a willingness to serve. They placed great importance on a teacher's ability to promote student growth in their own classrooms, as well as the level of respect a teacher is afforded by his or her colleagues. Principals also sought teacher leaders with a positive attitude toward the education profession, which they believed would help establish a culture of success within their schools.

Principals who participated in the study demonstrated, through their reported actions, that they sought to develop all teachers as leaders. There was little discernable difference between the leadership development activities offered to teacher leaders as opposed to those offered to all teachers. Principals in successful schools reported providing at least some formal training for all



teachers in the analysis and use of classroom assessment data as a tool for instructional planning, a skill touted by the literature on teacher leadership. Principals also worked to provide all teachers with professional learning community protocols, as well as collaboration and team building. When asked about the lack of differentiation in the development of identified teacher leaders, one principal noted the importance of giving all teachers a voice; another principal underscored the importance of distributing leadership across the school. Both responses point to the need not only to expect leadership from all teachers, but to empower them to do so by developing their capacity to lead.

While the development of teacher leaders is important, equally important is a principal's ability to distribute leadership effectively among his or her staff. Principals in successful elementary schools reported using formal structures to promote collaboration among staff, and between staff and administration. They reported a focus on structured and sustained professional development related to curricular and instructional goals. To a lesser degree, principals reported using structures to ensure collective responsibility for instructional planning and student learning. Principals agreed on the importance of recognizing the expertise of their teachers, and implementing structures to capitalize on that expertise. These results embody the assertions from the literature that a principal's willingness to share leadership is as important as the teachers' ability to lead.

Principals were asked about their efforts to create and maintain a collaborative work environment, an element identified in the literature as critical to the effective use of teachers as leaders in schools. Principals reported routine reliance on their School Improvement Teams to investigate, discuss, and make decisions on key issues in the schools. The principals' responses indicate that they serve as facilitators of decision-making and problem-solving, ceding a certain

level of control to the will of the group. From instructional practices and professional development to school organization and staffing, principals in this study achieved a culture of collaboration and consensus by empowering their teachers to lead. By doing so, not only is leadership distributed across the school, but accountability and personal responsibility for the success of the school is shared among teachers with common goals and interests.

### **Recommendations for Wayne County Public Schools**

Wayne County Public Schools has established leadership development programs for its school-based administrators. Leadership Academy is a professional learning community for aspiring principals designed to help them better serve in their current roles as assistant principals and elementary curriculum specialists, as well as to prepare them for their potential accession to the principalship. Leadership Academy Plus is a professional learning community for beginning principals designed to further support their development in the early years of their tenure in their schools' highest ranking role. Additionally, Wayne County Public Schools employs a fourteen Teaching and Learning Coaches, a cadre of district-level teacher leaders primarily responsible for the nurturing and development of beginning teachers, as well as assisting with the professional development of all staff. All three of these programs have been recognized by AdvancED as positive, proactive approaches to inducting and developing school leaders. Our district also uses teacher representatives from our schools on various content-specific or task-specific committees and councils. While our district has formalized its approach to leadership development with these three groups, development of teacher leaders in our schools is still largely unstructured, and relies almost solely on any personal expertise or interest that may exist in a school's administrators or teachers.

Based on the current literature on teacher leadership and the results of this study, I offer the following recommendations for better identification, development, and utilization of teacher leaders in Wayne County Public Schools.

### **Provide Training and Support for Administrators in the Identified Characteristics of Successful Teacher Leaders**

Wayne County Public Schools should develop the capacity of building-level administrators to capitalize on the leadership potential that exists within our schools. Similar to teacher leaders, our administrators often rely on their innate ability to “know leaders when they see them,” and to then use those leaders only to the extent that their instincts guide them. The focus of this development should be guided by the literature, with an emphasis on the use of distributed leadership and the development of a collaborative culture that promotes it. By providing formal training for principals, assistant principals, and elementary curriculum specialists, our district can help them expand the use of teacher leadership in their schools in ways that are purposeful, research-based, and focused on school improvement. Wayne County Public Schools should also develop a district-wide approach to further develop strong teacher leaders who seek to lead beyond their schools. This should include two facets. First, we should promote the development of teachers as leaders of district initiatives by expanding their roles. Our district currently relies on teacher representatives largely to disseminate information. While this is an important and necessary function, we must also empower teachers to lead district-wide change from within their schools. Second, we must encourage the development of teachers as potential school administrators. This currently takes place at the school level as principals assist with graduate school projects and administrative internships. At the district level, we can create opportunities for potential administrators, or even those who might simply be curious about

developing their talents, to be exposed to leadership across the district and from multiple perspectives.

### **Provide Professional Development in Identified Leadership Skills**

Develop the capacity of all teachers to participate in formal leadership roles and informal leadership tasks that exist within all schools. While not all teachers desire titles or roles traditionally associated with school leadership, all teachers are expected to operate effectively in an educational environment that values collaboration, data-driven actions, and shared accountability for student success. Principals are already working toward this, but district-level support is needed to ensure the consistent use of practices that have already proven to be successful in some schools within and outside of our district.

### **Provide Structures and Supports for Utilizing Teachers as Leaders in our Schools**

Identify and replicate successful practices in schools within and outside of our district. Traditional structures and processes are currently in place at the school and district level. By using existing structures in new ways, teachers can become more prepared and empowered to lead without leaving behind many of the traditional frameworks that exist within the profession. Existing teacher committees and councils can be used for new purposes, traditional schedules can be adjusted to meet new needs, and new protocols can be introduced to ensure that distributed leadership drives school improvement throughout our schools. Further, we must assist our principals in creating a results-driven, collaborative culture that not only accepts teacher leadership, but promotes it.

As with any initiative in a school district, the improved identification, development, and utilization of teachers as leaders of school improvement may take a great deal of planning, input from key stakeholders, and purposeful execution. Success may lie in the ability to:

- Establish the importance of teacher leadership among all stakeholders;
- Incorporate best practices in teacher leadership into existing district structures and systems;
- Replicate “pockets of success” that currently exist in some of the schools; and
- Sustain efforts to improve over an extended period of time.

The results of this study and the recommendations herein will be presented to the superintendent and his leadership team in October, 2014, for consideration. The presentation will occur during the weekly leadership team meeting. It is my hope that sharing these findings will lead to conversations across the district about how the current practices in the identification, development, and utilization of teachers as leaders of school improvement might be enhanced.

### **Implications for Other School Districts**

For districts who seek to examine their own use of teacher leadership practices, I offer the following recommendations:

- Examine the criteria school leaders use to select teachers for leadership roles and tasks. Ensure that teacher leaders are recognized in their schools as trusted experts who get results.
- Examine the roles and tasks entrusted to teacher leaders. Ensure that the leadership roles and tasks assigned to teachers are closely related to curriculum and instruction and professional development. Avoid roles that place teachers in positions of authority (real or perceived) over each other.
- Provide teachers with professional development designed to promote leadership for school improvement. Data analysis, instructional collaboration, and functioning as an effective professional learning community are widely valued in successful schools.

- Create a collaborative, results-oriented culture that accepts and promotes teachers as leaders. This should include productive and collaborative relationships between teachers and administrators, as well as among the teaching staff itself.

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## APPENDIX A: QUALIFYING SCHOOLS

<i>Sample Schools</i>		Accountability Status 2011-2012	Accountability Status 2010-2011	Accountability Status 2009-2010	Accountability Status 2008-2009
School	District				
Chocowinity Primary	Beaufort County Schools	Honor School of Excellence	Honor School of Excellence	School of Distinction	School of Distinction
Town Creek Elementary	Brunswick County Schools	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	Not Listed
Union Elementary	Brunswick County Schools	Honor School of Excellence	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction
Grandy Primary	Camden County Schools	School of Distinction	Honor School of Excellence	School of Distinction	School of Distinction
Atlantic Elementary	Carteret County Schools	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction
Beaufort Elementary	Carteret County Schools	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Progress
Bogue Sound Elementary	Carteret County Schools	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction
Harkers Island Elementary	Carteret County Schools	Honor School of Excellence	Honor School of Excellence	Honor School of Excellence	Honor School of Excellence
Newport Elementary	Carteret County Schools	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Progress
White Oak Elementary	Carteret County Schools	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction

Albert H. Bangert Elementary	Craven County Schools	School of Progress	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction
Arthur W. Edwards Elementary	Craven County Schools	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction
Brinson Memorial Elementary	Craven County Schools	School of Distinction	Honor School of Excellence	School of Distinction	School of Distinction
Creekside Elementary	Craven County Schools	Honor School of Excellence	Honor School of Excellence	Honor School of Excellence	Honor School of Excellence
W. Jesse Gurganus Elementary	Craven County Schools	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction
Central Elementary	Currituck County Schools	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Progress	School of Distinction
Knotts Island Elementary	Currituck County Schools	Honor School of Excellence	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction
Moyock Elementary	Currituck County Schools	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction
Cape Hatteras Elementary	Dare County Schools	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	Honor School of Excellence
First Flight Elementary	Dare County Schools	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction
Kitty Hawk Elementary	Dare County Schools	Honor School of Excellence	Honor School of Excellence	Honor School of Excellence	School of Distinction

Nags Head Elementary	Dare County Schools	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction
Banks Elementary	Lenoir County Schools	School of Progress	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction
Moss Hill Elementary	Lenoir County Schools	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Progress
College Park Elementary	New Hanover County Schools	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Progress
Dr. Hubert Eaton Sr. Elementary	New Hanover County Schools	Honor School of Excellence	Honor School of Excellence	Honor School of Excellence	School of Distinction
Dr. John Codington Elementary	New Hanover County Schools	Honor School of Excellence	Honor School of Excellence	Honor School of Excellence	Honor School of Excellence
Edwin A. Anderson Elementary	New Hanover County Schools	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Progress
Heyward C. Bellamy Elementary	New Hanover County Schools	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Progress
Holly Tree Elementary	New Hanover County Schools	Honor School of Excellence	Honor School of Excellence	Honor School of Excellence	School of Distinction

Ogden Elementary	New Hanover County Schools	Honor School of Excellence	Honor School of Excellence	Honor School of Excellence	Honor School of Excellence
Wrightsville Beach Elementary	New Hanover County Schools	Honor School of Excellence	Honor School of Excellence	Honor School of Excellence	Honor School of Excellence
Bell Fork Elementary	Onslow County Schools	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Progress
Carolina Forest Elementary	Onslow County Schools	Honor School of Excellence	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Progress
Parkwood Elementary	Onslow County Schools	School of Progress	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction
Southwest Elementary	Onslow County Schools	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Progress
Stateside Elementary	Onslow County Schools	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	Not Listed
Swansboro Elementary	Onslow County Schools	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction
South Topsail Elementary	Pender County Schools	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	Honor School of Excellence	School of Distinction
Hargrove Elementary	Sampson County Schools	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Progress



Plain View Elementary	Sampson County Schools	Honor School of Excellence	School of Distinction	School of Distinction	School of Progress
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## **APPENDIX B: ELECTRONIC SURVEY OF PRINCIPALS**

### **OF PARTICIPANT SCHOOLS**

The Identification, Development, and Utilization of Teachers as Leaders  
*A Survey of Principal Perceptions and Practices*

The North Carolina School Executive Evaluation explicitly promotes the use of distributed leadership for school improvement. Similarly, the Rubric for Evaluating North Carolina Teachers denotes specific leadership practices expected of classroom teachers. The following survey is an attempt to discover and compile best practices in the identification, development, and utilization of teachers as leaders at the elementary level.

#### **Participant Demographics**

Please select the District / LEA in which you work.

- ☐ Beaufort
- ☐ Brunswick
- ☐ Camden
- ☐ Carteret
- ☐ Craven
- ☐ Currituck
- ☐ Dare
- ☐ Lenoir
- ☐ New Hanover
- ☐ Onslow
- ☐ Pender
- ☐ Sampson

What grades does your school serve (check all that apply)?

- ☐ Pre-K
- ☐ K
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5
- ☐ 6
- ☐ 7
- ☐ 8

How many certified teachers work at your school?

- ☐ Less than 20
- ☐ 21 – 40
- ☐ 41 – 60
- ☐ More than 60

How long have you been the principal AT THIS SCHOOL?

- ☐ 0 – 3 years
- ☐ 4 – 6 years
- ☐ 7 – 9 years
- ☐ 10 or more years

How long have you been a principal AT ANY SCHOOL?

- ☐ 0 – 3 years
- ☐ 4 – 6 years
- ☐ 7 – 9 years
- ☐ 10 or more years

#### Identification of Teacher as Leaders

What formal and informal teacher leadership roles currently exist in your school (check all that apply)?

- ☐ Grade / Department Chair
- ☐ Committee Chair
- ☐ School Improvement Team Member
- ☐ Mentor
- ☐ Lead Teacher
- ☐ Task Force / Ad Hoc Committee
- ☐ Program Head
- ☐ Subject / Content Leader
- ☐ Professional Development Leader
- ☐ Curriculum Facilitator / Specialist
- ☐ Literacy Coach
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Rate the degree to which each of the following factors influence your selection of teachers for formal or informal leadership roles in your school:

	Little or No Influence for Selection	Some Influence for Selection	Significant Influence for Selection
Teacher's years of experience in education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teacher's years of experience in our school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teacher's willingness to serve as a leader	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teacher's formal training in leadership skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teacher's reputation as a strong classroom teacher	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teacher's content area expertise	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teacher's test results – student PROFICIENCY	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teacher's test results – student GROWTH	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teacher's interpersonal skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teacher's popularity among his/her colleagues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teacher's level of respect among his/her colleagues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teacher's attitude toward education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teacher's interest in the task or role for which he/she is being considered	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Development of Teacher as Leaders

Rate the degree to which your school provides training for ALL TEACHERS in the following teacher leadership skills:

	Little or No Formal or Informal Training	Some Formal or Informal Training Provided	Significant Formal Training Provided
Teachers are trained in the analysis and use of classroom assessment data as a tool for instructional planning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers are trained in the analysis and use of school wide assessment data as a tool for school improvement planning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers are trained in protocols to ensure their effective PARTICIPATION IN professional learning communities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers are trained in protocols to ensure their effective LEADERSHIP OF professional learning communities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers are trained in collaboration and team building.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers are trained in consensus building.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers are trained in conflict management and resolution.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers are trained to provide each other with feedback intended to improve performance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Rate the degree to which your school provides training for TEACHER LEADERS in the following teacher leadership skills:

	Little or No Formal or Informal Training	Some Formal or Informal Training Provided	Significant Formal Training Provided
Teacher leaders are trained in the analysis and use of classroom assessment data as a tool for instructional planning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teacher leaders are trained in the analysis and use of school wide assessment data as a tool for school improvement planning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teacher leaders are trained in protocols to ensure their effective PARTICIPATION IN school improvement planning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teacher leaders are trained in protocols to ensure their effective LEADERSHIP OF school improvement planning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teacher leaders are trained in collaboration and team building.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teacher leaders are trained in consensus building.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teacher leaders are trained in conflict management and resolution.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teacher leaders are trained to provide their colleagues with feedback intended to improve performance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Utilization of Teachers as Leaders

In what tasks do you currently involve teacher leaders in your school (check all that apply)?

- ☐ Policy Development
- ☐ Curriculum Planning
- ☐ Formative Assessment Development
- ☐ Data Analysis
- ☐ Mentoring / Coaching
- ☐ Interviewing / Hiring of New Staff
- ☐ Evaluating Other Teachers
- ☐ Budget Development
- ☐ Evaluating Materials and Resources
- ☐ Conflict Management / Resolution (staff, not students)
- ☐ Professional Development Planning / Delivery
- ☐ Coordinating Grade / Department Resources
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Rate the degree to which you create and utilize processes to distribute leadership and decision-making throughout the school, specifically with regard to your use of teachers as leaders in the school:

I seek input from teachers when making important decisions at school.

- ☐ Never      ☐ Rarely      ☐ Sometimes      ☐ Often      ☐ Always

I believe it is important to provide opportunities for teachers to assume leadership and decision-making roles within the school.

- ☐ Never      ☐ Rarely      ☐ Sometimes      ☐ Often      ☐ Always

I involve teachers in decisions about school governance.

- ☐ Never      ☐ Rarely      ☐ Sometimes      ☐ Often      ☐ Always

I involve teachers in decisions about curriculum and instruction.

- ☐ Never      ☐ Rarely      ☐ Sometimes      ☐ Often      ☐ Always

I provide leadership development activities for teachers.

- ☐ Never      ☐ Rarely      ☐ Sometimes      ☐ Often      ☐ Always

I give teachers autonomy to make decisions.

- ☐ Never      ☐ Rarely      ☐ Sometimes      ☐ Often      ☐ Always

I support decisions made as part of the collective decision-making process.

- ☐ Never      ☐ Rarely      ☐ Sometimes      ☐ Often      ☐ Always

I create opportunities for teachers to assume leadership roles.

- ☐ Never      ☐ Rarely      ☐ Sometimes      ☐ Often      ☐ Always

I encourage staff members to accept leadership responsibilities outside of our school.

- ☐ Never      ☐ Rarely      ☐ Sometimes      ☐ Often      ☐ Always

I incorporate teachers into leadership roles in ways that foster their career development.

- ☐ Never      ☐ Rarely      ☐ Sometimes      ☐ Often      ☐ Always

Rate the degree to which you work to create and maintain a collaborative work environment, specifically with regard to your use of teachers as leaders in the school:

I purposefully promote collaboration within the school.

- ☐ Never      ☐ Rarely      ☐ Sometimes      ☐ Often      ☐ Always

I rely on the School Improvement Team to make decisions about school policies and practices.

- ☐ Never      ☐ Rarely      ☐ Sometimes      ☐ Often      ☐ Always

I monitor the implementation and response to school policies and provide feedback to the School Improvement Team for their consideration.

- ☐ Never      ☐ Rarely      ☐ Sometimes      ☐ Often      ☐ Always

I involve the School Improvement Team in school wide communications processes.

- ☐ Never      ☐ Rarely      ☐ Sometimes      ☐ Often      ☐ Always

I purposefully promote cohesion, collaboration, and cooperation among teachers.

- ☐ Never      ☐ Rarely      ☐ Sometimes      ☐ Often      ☐ Always

I purposefully promote distributed leadership as a means to continuous school improvement.

- ☐ Never      ☐ Rarely      ☐ Sometimes      ☐ Often      ☐ Always

I purposefully promote a sense of efficacy and empowerment among teachers.

- ☐ Never      ☐ Rarely      ☐ Sometimes      ☐ Often      ☐ Always

I purposefully work to develop efficacy and empowerment among teachers.

- ☐ Never      ☐ Rarely      ☐ Sometimes      ☐ Often      ☐ Always



Rate the degree to which you implement the following practices, specifically with regard to your use of teachers as leaders in the school:

I provide and implement structures for professional learning communities (e.g., dedicated time, common forms / protocols).

☐ Never      ☐ Rarely      ☐ Sometimes      ☐ Often      ☐ Always

I provide and implement structures for results-oriented professional development (e.g., expectations for implementation, assistance with implementation).

☐ Never      ☐ Rarely      ☐ Sometimes      ☐ Often      ☐ Always

I provide and implement structures for collective responsibility for instructional planning for student learning (e.g., dedicated time, written / stated expectation).

☐ Never      ☐ Rarely      ☐ Sometimes      ☐ Often      ☐ Always

I ensure that professional development within the school is aligned with curricular, instructional, and assessment needs.

☐ Never      ☐ Rarely      ☐ Sometimes      ☐ Often      ☐ Always

I work to meet the unique professional development needs of individual staff members.

☐ Never      ☐ Rarely      ☐ Sometimes      ☐ Often      ☐ Always

I work to identify and support new or emerging teacher leaders in the school.

☐ Never      ☐ Rarely      ☐ Sometimes      ☐ Often      ☐ Always

I ensure that professional development is available for teachers with potential to serve as mentors and coaches.

☐ Never      ☐ Rarely      ☐ Sometimes      ☐ Often      ☐ Always

I purposefully build systems and relationships that utilize teacher's expertise to realize the school's goals.

☐ Never      ☐ Rarely      ☐ Sometimes      ☐ Often      ☐ Always

I utilize my awareness of teacher professional needs, issues, and interests to facilitate distributed governance and shared decision making.

☐ Never      ☐ Rarely      ☐ Sometimes      ☐ Often      ☐ Always

Please share any programs, processes, or practices currently in place in your school or district that promote the effective identification, development, and utilization of teachers as leaders.

--

Would you consent to a brief conversation by phone or in person as a follow up to this survey?  
If so, please list your name and telephone number below.

Would you like to receive an overview of the results of this survey? If so, please list your e-mail  
address below.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!

## **APPENDIX C: FOLLOW UP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND PROTOCOL**

The researcher reserves the right to conduct follow up interviews with willing participants in an effort to gain deeper insight into promising practices as identified by the online survey detailed in Appendix B. Follow up interviews may be conducted by telephone or in person, and will be documented by audio recording with the permission of the participant. The following questions will be used to guide the interviews:

- What was the origin of the practice identified in the online survey?
- What trainings (formal or informal) would you recommend other schools and / or districts provide emerging teacher leaders?
- How has your approach to teacher leadership evolved over time?
- How has your school benefited from the use of teachers as leaders?
- Does your district take purposeful steps to develop teacher leaders? If so, please describe them.

Please note these questions are not intended to be comprehensive or exclusive. It is the intent of the researcher to engage willing participants in a meaningful, open dialogue about teacher leadership. As such, each interview may be somewhat different from the others.

**APPENDIX D: FOLLOW UP QUESTIONNAIRE DISTRIBUTED  
AND COLLECTED BY ELECTRONIC MAIL**

The researcher sent four general questions to each of the participants who expressed a willingness to have a follow up interview. Each participant was given two opportunities to respond by electronic mail.

- What trainings (formal or informal) would you recommend other schools and / or districts provide emerging teacher leaders?
- How has your approach to teacher leadership evolved over time?
- How has your school benefited from the use of teachers as leaders?
- Does your district take purposeful steps to develop teacher leaders? If so, please describe them.

Each of the participants was asked between two and six additional questions based their initial survey responses. Those questions are not included in this appendix due to the identifiable information contained within some of questions. The questions are available for committee review upon request.

## APPENDIX E: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



**EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY**  
**University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board Office**  
4N-70 Brody Medical Sciences Building· Mail Stop 682  
600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834

Office **252-744-2914** · Fax **252-744-2284** · **[www.ecu.edu/irb](http://www.ecu.edu/irb)**

Notification of Initial Approval: Expedited

From: Social/Behavioral IRB  
To: David Lewis  
CC: Jim McDowelle  
David Lewis  
Date: 12/20/2013  
Re: UMCIRB 13-002252  
Teacher Leadership in Eastern North Carolina

I am pleased to inform you that your Expedited Application was approved. Approval of the study and any consent form(s) is for the period of 12/20/2013 to 12/19/2014. The research study is eligible for review under expedited category #6, 7. The Chairperson (or designee) deemed this study no more than minimal risk.

Changes to this approved research may not be initiated without UMCIRB review except when necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to the participant. All unanticipated problems involving risks to participants and others must be promptly reported to the UMCIRB. The investigator must submit a continuing review/closure application to the UMCIRB prior to the date of study expiration. The Investigator must adhere to all reporting requirements for this study.

Approved consent documents with the IRB approval date stamped on the document should be used to consent participants (consent documents with the IRB approval date stamp are found under the Documents tab in the study workspace).

The approval includes the following items:	Description
Name	
COI Disclosure Form - D. Lewis	COI Disclosure Form
D. Lewis - Consent Form	Consent Forms
David Lewis - Dissertation Study Proposal.docx	Study Protocol or Grant Application
Interview Guide - David A Lewis.docx	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Research Protocol - David A Lewis.docx	Study Protocol or Grant Application
Survey - David A Lewis.docx	Surveys and Questionnaires

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

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IRB00000705 East Carolina U IRB #1 (Biomedical) IORG0000418  
IRB00003781 East Carolina U IRB #2 (Behavioral/SS) IORG0000418